

Hon. Lolo M. Moliga
Governor, American Samoa Government

Hon. Lemanu P. Mauga
Lt. Governor, American Samoa Government



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June 3, 2019

Mr. Ryan Palmer
Telecommunications Access Policy Division
Wireline Competition Bureau
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Via ECFS

Re: *American Samoa Telecommunications Authority, Petition for Reconsideration, CC
Docket 02-6*

Dear Mr. Palmer:

As the Director of Education for the American Samoa Government, I am writing this letter in support of the American Samoa Telecommunications Authority's (ASTCA's) recently-filed petition for reconsideration. I am informed that ASTCA missed the deadline for submitting E-rate program-related invoices for Funding Year 2017, and is seeking the Commission's permission to submit those invoices, totaling more than half a million dollars, after the deadline.

ASTCA, a public agency like the American Samoa Department of Education (DOE), supplies various E-rate services to the DOE system, having won those contracts through a competitive bidding process. My department administers the E-rate program for American Samoa's public and private schools. I can therefore confirm that ASTCA is a dedicated partner to our E-rate program and a high quality service provider. The services ASTCA delivered in E-rate Funding Year 2017, an especially challenging year for American Samoa and for ASTCA, were acceptable from DOE's perspective.

I understand that the Commission has the authority to allow late submission of E-rate program invoices if there are extraordinary circumstances and if it is in the public interest. My agency, DOE, supports ASTCA's request due to extraordinary circumstances, and we certainly endorse the point of view that such a waiver is in the public interest.

ASTCA missed its filing deadline because it took my agency and the American Samoa Government an exceptionally long time to negotiate and pay invoices for E-rate services following Tropical Storm Gita in February 2018. ASTCA submitted the required documentation to DOE in a timely manner, and followed up on numerous occasions, but my staff at DOE was unable to pay those invoices quickly enough to allow ASTCA to meet its E-rate program deadlines.

We were hard at work at DOE but, admittedly, our focus was on recovering from the aftermath of Gita, which devastated our territory. The extensive damage that Gita caused to American Samoa's infrastructure set back every part of our government for all of 2018. With limited resources, it took us longer than anticipated to complete the ordinary

Process by which we routinely validate ASTCA's (and all other service provider) invoices.

Although ASTCA is American Samoa's largest Internet service provider, it is still a small local organization with exactly one E-rate customer. Like the DOE, ASTCA also saw its already limited resources become even more strained in the aftermath of Gita, particularly following the tragic and unexpected death of Mr. Pulelei'ite Tufele Jr., ASTCA's late Chief Executive Officer. With a natural disaster, a sudden change in management, and the DOE's delays, ASTCA faced a series of unique challenges to meeting its deadlines.

It is regrettable that ASTCA was unable to meet an important E-rate program deadline. My office particularly regrets that it lacked the resources to address ASTCA's invoices in a more timely matter. And since Gita, we have met with the Acting Governor and ASTCA, and taken concrete steps to ensure that ASTCA does not miss any E-rate program deadlines in the future.

Our 17,000 school children rely on ASTCA's services to ensure that they are adequately prepared to succeed in the increasingly digital global economy. E-rate funding is essential to this end. Given the extraordinary circumstances at hand, DOE's role in the delay, and ASTCA's and DOE's subsequent work to ensure that no program deadlines are missed in the future, we urge you to reconsider your decision and accept ASTCA's invoices for filing.

Please feel free to reach out and contact me with any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ruth Matagi-Tofiga", written in a cursive style.

Dr. Ruth Matagi-Tofiga
Director, Department of Education